

2016

CHRIS ANDERSON, District Biologist
MIKE SMITH, Assistant District Biologist



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



DISTRICT 12 HUNTING PROSPECTS

King County

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DISTRICT 12 GENERAL OVERVIEW	1
ELK	1
DEER.....	3
BEAR	6
COUGAR	7
PHEASANT	7
QUAIL.....	7
FOREST GROUSE	7
TURKEY	8
WATERFOWL.....	8
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.....	9
Firearms Restriction Areas in King County	9

DISTRICT 12 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 12 is comprised of six game management units (GMUs), including 422 (Vashon/Maury Islands), 454 (Issaquah), 460 (Snoqualmie), 466 (Stampede), 485 (Green River, open to appropriate deer and elk permit holders only), and 490 (Cedar River, currently closed to hunting). Landownership in the district is a checkerboard of private, state, and federal holdings. The densest private (urban and suburban) developments are found in the Issaquah Unit (GMU 454), while private agricultural holdings are primarily located in the northwestern part of the Snoqualmie Unit (GMU 460).

A great tool for determining property ownership and boundaries can be found at King County IMAP. It is a mapping tool provided by the county [GIS Center](#).

The cities of Tacoma and Seattle each own and operate municipal watersheds in southeast King County, totaling about 250,532 acres that supply the drinking water for their cities. One is in the Green River drainage (GMU 485), one is in the Tolt River drainage (GMU 460), and the other is in the Cedar River drainage (GMU 490).

The largest percentage of huntable area is U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land, but industrial timber companies have large land holdings in the area. Private, state, and federally owned lands are managed primarily to produce timber. USFS lands are managed for multiple uses, including timber, recreation, and wildlife, with a current emphasis on growing and managing old growth forests.

Remember to be a good hunting and outdoor recreation steward. Be respectful of others. Don't hunt areas where there is heavy, regular recreation use. Pick up after yourself and don't leave a gut pile.

ELK

Hunters should place greater emphasis on riparian forest habitats and agricultural areas throughout the district. Many of District 12's elk reside on private land, so please make sure you have permission before you hunt.

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) provides good hunting opportunities in areas of the unit. However, hunters are advised to scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated, with restricted access. Many of the elk in the GMU are found (at least at times) on private property in valley bottoms. Hunters should network well in advance to gain access to hunt these properties. Please be mindful of residences, domestic animals (pets/livestock), and other non-target objects downrange when hunting these areas. Hunters should plan ahead for safe shooting lanes. A map of [King County no shooting areas](#) is available online and a description of firearm restriction areas can be found on page 90 of the hunting regulations pamphlet.

Elk in GMU 454 (Issaquah) continue to be managed with liberal seasons designed to reduce road kills and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly-developed areas. Much of this unit is in private property. Pre-season planning and networking may be paramount for hunters attempting to gain access in this unit. Hunters should be mindful of safety concerns and firearm restrictions (see above) in this unit as well. Bow hunters should have an advantage in gaining permission.

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a mix of private, state, and USFS lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). There are some old growth stands on USFS lands, with second growth timber dominating much of the unit. Hunters should be prepared for up to a 2,500 feet elevation change and steep terrain in this unit. In addition, early snowfall in this unit has the potential to strand hunters, but also the potential to aid in success.



Elk on the move in King County – Photo submitted to WDFW Image Gallery



Bull elk in GMU 460 – Photo by Mike Smith

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Elk Harvest Reports](#).

DEER

Population surveys have not been conducted for several years throughout District 12, but hunting prospects are believed to be quite good on private and public lands, where hunting is allowed, from anecdotal observations.

GMU 422 covers all of Vashon and Maury Islands. Hunting access on Vashon and Maury islands is largely on private agricultural and hobby farm properties. Hunters must take time to network with communities and property owners for opportunity and access. Island Center Forest, operated by King County Parks, offers modern firearm season access to the public. For location information, King County Department of Natural Resource announcements, and any hunt restrictions in the few weeks prior to the opening of modern firearm season, [click here](#).

Additional opportunities (incorporated in recent years) will continue in the second deer special permit category for GMU 422. Please refer to the current [Big Game](#) pamphlet at for updated listings of these opportunities. Deer in GMU 454 (Issaquah) continue to be managed with liberal seasons designed to prevent road kills and keep damage issues at acceptable levels in highly-developed areas. This unit is approximately 90 percent private land and access continues to be a problem for hunters. Success in this unit may well depend on getting to know your neighbors and broaching the subject of hunting as a means of protecting their fruit trees and vegetable beds. Firearm restrictions are in place because landowners are concerned about safety. Bow hunters should have an advantage in gaining permission.



A black-tailed deer buck in GMU 454, damaging landscape plantings – Photo submitted to WDFW Image Gallery

GMU 460 (Snoqualmie) provides good hunting opportunities throughout most of the unit. However, hunters are advised to scout their preferred hunting areas well in advance because state and private timberlands are gated, with restricted access. Forest management on these lands is largely favorable to deer and high quality opportunities are available for those willing to lace up their boots. Hunters should focus on early seral forests (< 30 years old) adjacent to mid (40-80 years old) or late successional (> 80 years old) stands. Additional emphasis should be placed on riparian forest habitats that provide ample forage and cover.



A buck on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, GMU 460 – Photo by Mike Smith

GMU 466 (Stampede) is a patchwork of private land, state lands, and USFS lands (Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest). It consists largely of second growth timber, with some old growth on USFS lands. This unit consists of a lot of steep ground, with about 2,500 feet in elevation change. Be prepared for early winter snowfall, which has the potential of stranding hunters, but also the potential to improve success.

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics based on hunter reporting can be found at [Deer Harvest Reports](#).

BEAR

Bears inhabit areas of District 12, but like elk, many are on private lands. Hunters should ensure they have the proper permissions to hunt the area they are interested in. Berry production throughout the district has been good and early this year. Bears may be found at lower elevations early on before they move higher as the season progresses.



Bear in GMU 460 – Photo by Mike Smith

Annual harvest reports and harvest statistics can be found at [Bear Harvest Reports](#).

COUGAR

The harvest guideline for GMU 460 is 5-6, while for GMU 466, the guideline is for three animals (there is no guideline for GMU 454 and GMU 485 is only open to deer or elk special permit holders). GMU 490 is closed to state hunting. The Director may close the late cougar hunting season on or after January 1 in either of these units if cougar harvest meets or exceeds the guideline. Starting January 1, hunters may hunt cougar until the hunt area harvest guideline has been reached, or April 30, whichever occurs first. It is each cougar hunter's responsibility to verify if the cougar late hunting season is open or closed in hunt areas with a harvest guideline. Cougar hunters can verify if the season is open or closed by calling the toll free cougar hunting hotline (1-866-364-4868) or visiting the Department's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/cougar/>. The hotline and website will be updated weekly beginning January 1, 2017. A 2017 cougar license/tag is required to hunt cougar in April 2017.

PHEASANT

Game farm produced pheasants will be released this fall on sites mapped on the [GoHunt](#) website. Nontoxic shot is required on all pheasant release sites.

Hunting hours for pheasant and quail in western Washington are from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. This includes the Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake units of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. For the rest of the hunting season, normal hunting hours (half hour before sunrise to half hour after sunset) will apply.

QUAIL

There are relatively few quail in District 12.

FOREST GROUSE

Ruffed and sooty (blue) grouse are present throughout the public and private forests of District 12. Warmer weather experienced this spring combined with anecdotal observations collected this summer suggest grouse populations increased slightly compared to last year.

Forest management in much of District 12 remains favorable for grouse. Hunters looking to harvest ruffed grouse should focus on elevations below 2,500 feet, early seral forests (5-25 years old) with ample berry crops present in the understory, and riparian forest habitats. Sooty grouse hunters can expect the greatest success along trails and ridgelines above 2,000 feet and within Pacific silver fir and noble fir forest stands with abundant huckleberries.



A male sooty grouse displaying on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm, GMU 460 – Photo by Chris Anderson

TURKEY

Wild turkeys remain relatively rare in District 12, and without predictable concentrations of birds. Accordingly, harvest prospects remain low even with considerable effort. Hunters must use #4 shot or smaller to hunt turkey.

WATERFOWL

Breeding area reports look good for the Pacific Flyway this year. Opportunity for harvest is expected to be good, dependent on weather conditions through the season. The best waterfowl hunting opportunities continue to be found in the lower Snoqualmie Valley, with public access provided on WDFW's Snoqualmie Wildlife Management Area (Cherry Valley, Stillwater, and Crescent Lake units). Hunters can only enter and hunt units between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the pheasant season. Additional opportunities can also be found in the Kent Valley. Hunters are encouraged to work with local private landowners to secure access to one of District 12's many river and agricultural valleys and improve their waterfowl hunting success. Refer to the [Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Regulations](#) for season dates and hours.

For an excellent introduction to waterfowl hunting, see [Let's Go Waterfowling](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

District 12 occurs within the ceded area of several Northwest Treaty Tribes and tribal hunting. Tribes set their own seasons and bag limits. Tribal Enforcement personnel ensure tribal hunting regulations, which are sometimes very different from state regulations, are followed.

More information regarding tribal hunting rights and state-tribal co-management can be found [online](#).

FIREARMS RESTRICTION AREAS IN KING COUNTY

Centerfire and rimfire rifles are not legal for hunting in the area west of Highway 203 (Monroe-Fall City), the Fall City-Preston Road to I-90, I-90 to Highway 18, Highway 18 to I-5, and I-5 to Pierce-King County line. They are also not legal for hunting on Vashon and Maury islands. For additional information, see page 90 of the [2016 Big Game Hunting Regulations](#). Through King County ordinances, no shooting areas have been established in many areas in the county. Please contact your local sheriff for specific locations.